

# Justicia Hídrica

Water accumulation, Conflicts, and Civil society action

Overview of contents  
and strategies



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“... justice, which in this world suffers greater  
scarcity than water in the desert ....”

Eduardo Galeano, *Los Muros*

# 'Water flows in the direction of power'.

Example, Ecuador  
(Justicia Hídrica 2011) :

"Peasant households with community irrigation systems are 86% of users, but have only 22% of the irrigated land and – what is worse – have access to only 13% of total flow.

The private sector, representing 1% of agricultural producers, concentrates 67% of the flow, according to official figures" [...].

"The landlords of the parishes in Imbabura province account for 91% of total flow, leaving the leftovers for small farmers" [...].



... Ecuador

“Flow rates authorized by the government for wells is scanty compared to the actual amount of underground water pumped out in Ecuador.

Large-scale farms drill wells and remove huge quantities of water behind the government’s back.

Water theft by agribusiness companies is enormous and greater for underground water than for surface water in most areas” (Justicia Hídrica 2011)



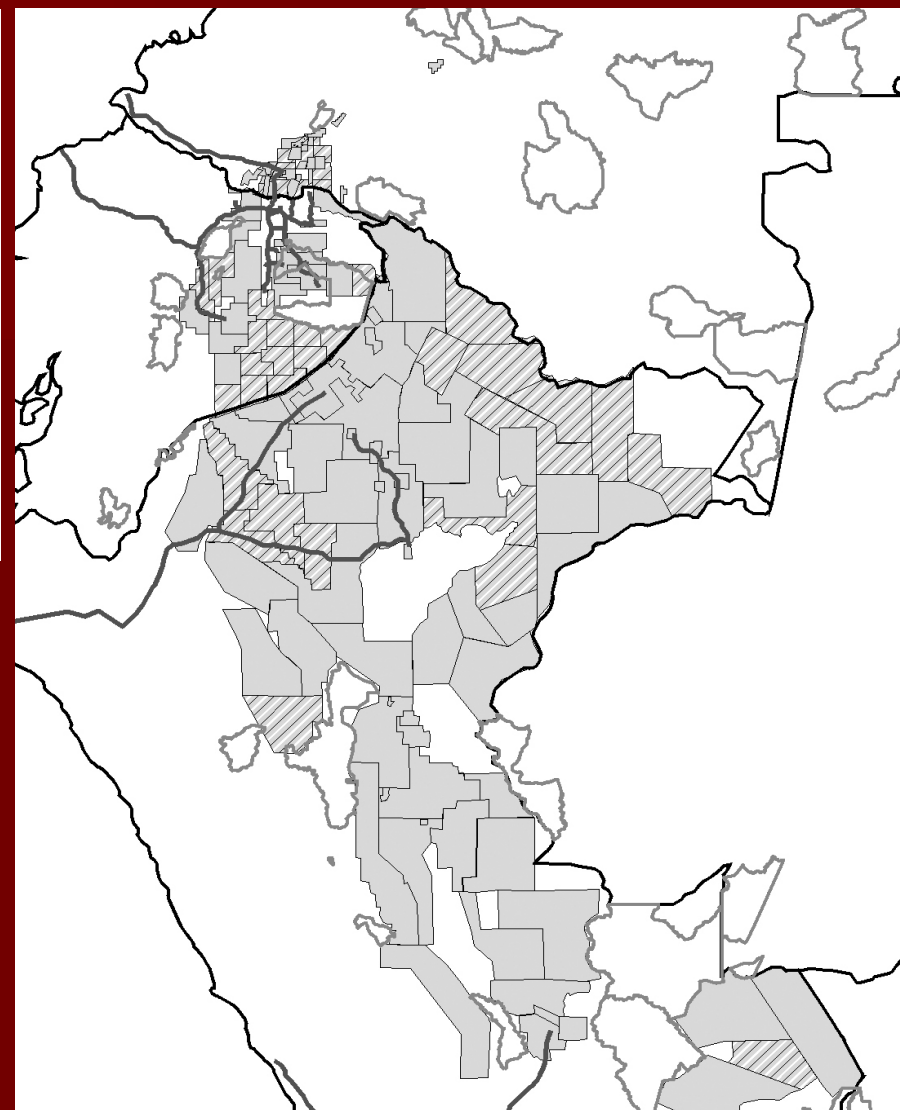
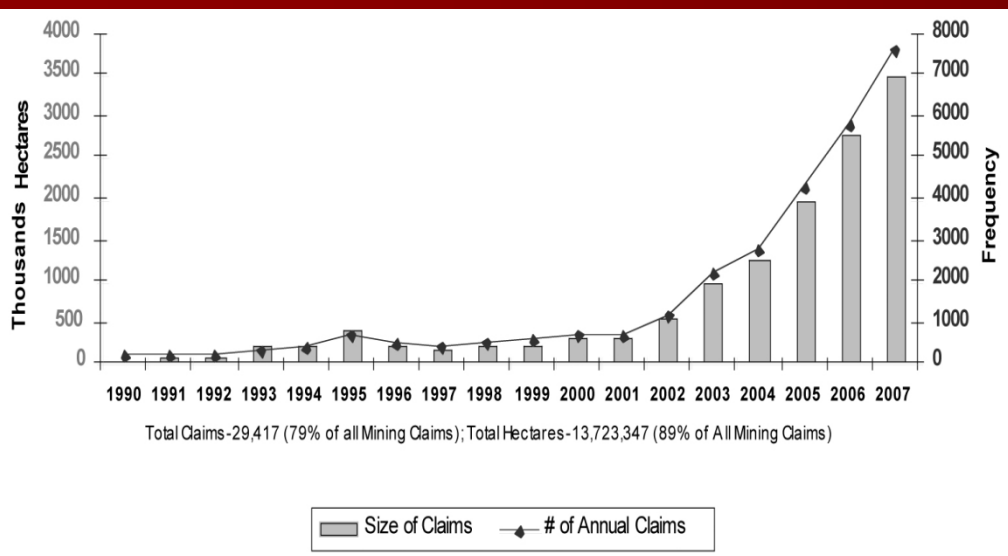


.... a broad international research, training and action alliance that strategically connects:

- interdisciplinary and comparative research on the dynamics of water accumulation and conflicts;
  - training of a critical mass of water professionals, grass-roots leaders and policy-makers;
  - support for civil society strategies that engage with the questions of those groups with less rights and voice in terms of water control
- ... combining cutting edge theoretical work with comparative empirical research chiefly in Latin America, but also in countries in Africa, Asia, North America and Europe.



Copyleft: Cordinadora del Agua, febrero del 2000



## Expansion of mining claims in Peru, 1997-2007 (Bebbington et al., in Boelens et al. 2010)



Hydrocarbon lots concessioned or subject to leasing.

\* Ecuadorian Amazon: 50%;

\* Peruvian Amazon: 70 %

(Bebbington et al., in Boelens et al. 2010)

*Research :*

## Specific objectives (1)

To conduct **comparative research** and stimulate **interactive learning** processes through a **multi-actor research and action network** in partnership with peasant and indigenous organizations, on:

[**Accumulation**] the dynamics and mechanisms of processes of accumulation of water and water rights, along lines including impacts of class, gender and ethnicity;

[**Conflicts**] the contents, dynamic nature and structural contradictions of the resulting conflicts;

[**Civil Society Action**] the content of apt strategies by grassroots and civil society actors to confront water injustice







## Majes project, Peru:

- \$ 1,300,000,000 US Dollars
- 15,000 hectares under irrigation
- 3,000 right-holder families
- \$ 80,000 USD / ha
- \$ 400,000 USD **per family** :
- to “recover” costs: \$ 25,000 /family
- only **0.2 %** of budget spent on indigenous upper basin communities

## Lessons learned? new Olmos project:

- 38.000 has : lots of 1000 has
- costs per ha : \$ 4.250 USD
- Cost per user : \$4.250.000 USD



# Specific objectives (2)

## *Capacity development:*

To train a gender-balanced, critical mass of water professionals enabling them to confront processes of water accumulation and conflict and support the interdisciplinary development of strategies that benefit the politically and economically most vulnerable user groups.







## Specific objectives (3)

### Development / Societal change:

To influence debate and encourage action among law- and policy-makers, and to support civil society strategies for more democratic water management policies, water conflict resolution mechanisms, and a more just water distribution



***Mi poncho no  
es anti balas***

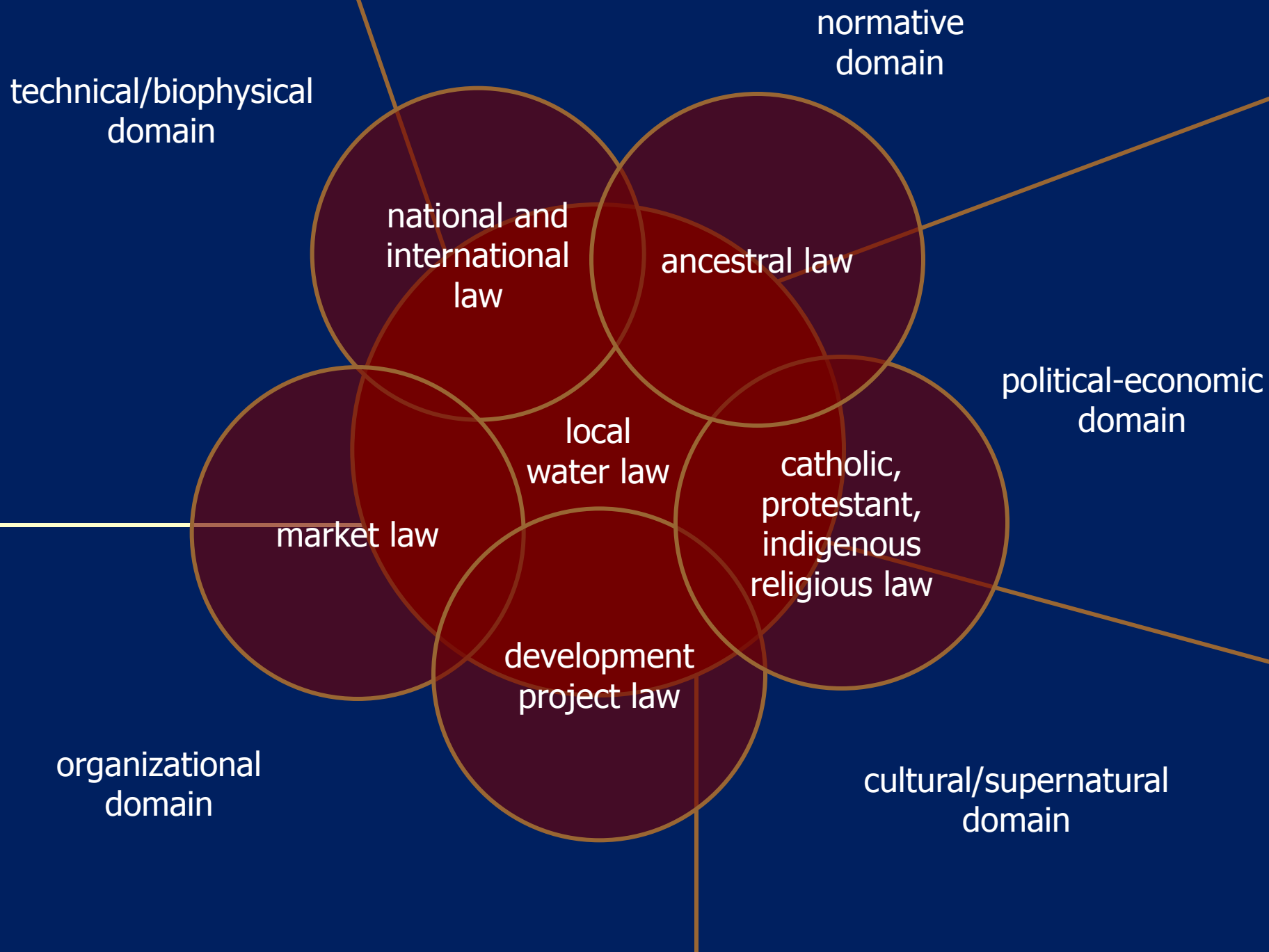
[My poncho is not  
bullet proof]

Graffiti

# Some interrelated concepts

- Power- knowledge- truth triangles: 'de-naturalization' and (re)politicization of water discourses and policies
  - Interdisciplinarity beyond the boundaries of natural and social sciences
  - Water struggles as disputes over: resources, rules, legitimate authority, and discourses
  - Local-global water injustice relations; and multiscalar dimensions of reactions by civil society and marginalized groups
  - Water security and rights, beyond dominant and formalistic representations:
    - ✓ Cultural-historically constructed and embedded
    - ✓ Politically shaped and enforced
    - ✓ Beyond simplism:
- ... water rights are not just 'government- or market-based' (or necessarily 'human rights')





- Water justice: beyond official law and universalist rightness, beyond 'what should be'
  - ✓ a relational conceptualization
  - ✓ (in)justice as experienced by marginalized groups
  - ✓ rooted, comparative, historical approach

analysis of:

- ✓ Formal Justice systems and structures
- ✓ social justice / equity / fairness perceptions
- ✓ effects of use and imposition of particular justice systems and discourses (and negation of others)

And: justice as a *process*





‘Moral Regime Change’ –

the moral mission to replace local water rights systems by modern ones.

... and bring them under  
State and market control

ERA ( <i>Echelons of Rights Analysis</i> )  Struggles over:	Official Justice (law, regulation, policies)	Social Justice		
		Justice according to the researcher's perspective	Concepts and notions of justice according to actors involved	Concept of Water Justice as shared by the alliance
access to <b>resources</b> : water, land, infrastructure & technology, economic means, etc.				
definition of <b>contents of rules and rights</b>				
<b>legitimate authority</b>				
<b>discourses and knowledge</b> (that defend or challenge status quo, decisions and proposals related to above 3 echelons)				

Thematic areas  
and Crosscutting Themes (gender, identity, environmental justice)



# Comparative case studies

- Latin America:  
Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Argentina
- Africa (Mozambique), Europe (Spain) y North America (USA)
- Starting: Water Justice alliance in Asia and Africa
- Common Terms of Reference
- Field studies: articulation local-national-international



# Thematic and conceptual studies

... help to articulate new theoretical ideas, relevant for the alliance's main questions

## Themes:

	Acc.	Confl.	Civ.act
▪ extractive industries;			
▪ groundwater theft;			
▪ hydropower;			
▪ pollution;			
▪ inter-sector conflicts;			
▪ agro-export			



.... for example, agribusiness' water theft and chains of virtual water export to the North



# Other strategic activities

- **Annual Justicia Hidrica meeting** to bring together researchers and case studies, to compare research results and methods, and establish collective research needs and priorities.
- Research is recursively integrated with the **training of young water professionals: annual international Training Courses**.
- The research and training components strategically intertwine with **dissemination and policy advocacy** through action research, mass media activities, round table debates with policy-makers, and public conferences





Civil society, Participation and Sustainability?

Sharing water decision-making power is not a gift from policy-makers, state agencies or NGOs, or based on transparent dialogues.

Water democracy and social justice result from collective pressure from below...

rather than a neutral input for policy-making: the political *outcome* of grassroots struggles.



# Other strategic activities

- Radio debates, documentaries, films, peasant/indigenous cartography, etc.
- Strategic support to existing courses of allies
- Multi-level, multi-language publications
- Construction of interdisciplinary curriculum on Water Rights / Water Justice
- Web page and resource centre on water justice studies:







[www.justiciahidrica.org](http://www.justiciahidrica.org)